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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 000215

SIPDIS
FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2035/02/18
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: ACTIVISTS PREPARE FOR EL-BARADEI'S ARRIVAL; DETAINEES
RELEASED

REF: 09 CAIRO 2279

CLASSIFIED BY: Donald A. Blome, Minister-Counselor, State, ECPO;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. KEY POINTS

-- (SBU) Activists affiliated with the political opposition are planning to greet former IAEA Chairman Mohammed El-Baradei upon his scheduled February 19 arrival in Cairo from Vienna. In recent months, El-Baradei has spoken about a possible 2011 presidential run if the GOE enacts political reforms to ensure free and fair elections (reftel).

-- (U) El-Baradei's scheduled arrival has generated interest among political activists and the independent press.

-- (C) Early on February 17, the GOE detained two "April 6" activists and filed charges against them February 18 before releasing them later in the day.

12. (C) Comment: Discussion of El-Baradei's potential candidacy and his planned February 19 arrival seems to have energized opposition political activists and the independent press, but El-Baradei's broader public support remains unclear. Public reaction to El-Baradei's actions once he arrives could be an indication of his potential political staying power. El-Baradei has recently said he does not intend to run for president, but wants to advance democracy in Egypt. End comment.

Activists Prepare to Greet El-Baradei

13. (C) NGO activist Bassem Samir who is a member of the opposition El-Ghad party told us he and some of his colleagues are organizing activists to greet El-Baradei, and the "April 6" movement has said they are participating in this effort. El-Baradei's planned arrival has generated interest among activists and the independent press. A Facebook group supporting El-Baradei's candidacy has grown to almost 64,000 members. Egyptian novelist Alaa Al-Aswany published a February 16 op-ed article in independent "Shorouq" newspaper attributing youth enthusiasm for an El-Baradei candidacy

to GOE "failed and corrupt policies." Independent newspaper Al-Dostour devoted considerable coverage February 17 to El-Baradei's expected arrival, and called for citizens "who dream of a nation free of corruption" to greet El-Baradei at the airport.

"April 6" Activists Arrested and Released

14. (C) In the early morning hours of February 17, police arrested three "April 6" activists as they were driving in Cairo. "April 6" leader Ahmed Salah told us police detained fellow leader Ahmed Maher and two members, and subsequently released one of the members. Salah noted that the group had been spray painting political graffiti around Cairo welcoming El-Baradei and criticizing the GOE. The "Egyptian Chronicles" blog posted a photo February 17 of wall graffiti attributed to the activists saying, "Mubarak's regime is over, support the change, support El-Baradei's candidacy." Lawyers for the two detained activists confirmed to us that the Public Prosecutor charged them on February 18 with "attempting to overthrow the government, forcibly changing the constitution and incitement." "April 6" lawyers and Ahmed Salah confirmed to us that the GOE released the two activists on bail with charges pending on February 18 at approximately 5 PM local time. The lawyers did not expect the GOE to take further action on the case due to a lack of evidence to support the

charges.
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